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Barnes, Julius Howland

“Organization and fair
play”

[S.I.]

[c1922]

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Barnes, Julius Howland, 1873-

Box 273 "Organization and fair play"; address by Julius
H. Barnes, president, U. S. Chamber of commerce,
at luncheon meeting of the Chamber of commerce of
Dallas, Texas, November 20, 1922. [c1922]
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*"Organization and
Fair Play"*

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Box 273

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Fair Play”*

Address by

JULIUS H. BARNES

President, U. S. Chamber of Commerce

at

Luncheon Meeting of the Chamber of Commerce
of Dallas, Texas

November 20, 1922

Gift
Mrs O D Foster
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JULIUS H. BARNES

May 5, 1930 DA/Hec

"Organization and Fair Play"

In this visit to the State of Texas the Directors of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States are allowing themselves a personal satisfaction as well as equipping themselves for the better discharge of the responsibilities of their office. If the Chamber is to rise to the full measure of its obligations and of its opportunities, it must possess an intimate and comprehensive understanding of the needs of every section.

The State of Texas has always been the land of romance and adventure in the mind of the American youth. It still possesses the fascination of the frontier and the more modern interest of a great commercial community. With its oil, it quickens the process of modern industry in every line. With its cotton, it touches the intimate habits and homes of peoples of every land. With the products of its vast ranges, it reaches the tables of every American home. So bound up as it is with the industrial life and the human existence of our own country and our

world neighbors, it is of especial usefulness that the Directors should from their own busy lives plan this intimate and friendly contact with the great Southwest.

The Chamber of Commerce of the United States rightfully assumes the leadership of American business organizations and assumes that leadership with very sober appreciation of its opportunities and its responsibilities. No business is so large that it should not be glad to enroll itself among the supporters of the National Chamber and no business so small that the Chamber shall not understand its needs and defend its rightful activities. After all, big business in its fundamentals is the same as little business and the same as big farming and little farming.

The directors of the vast enterprises, the development of which is due to the American genius for large-scale production, necessarily carry a greater multitude of responsibilities and obligations pressing upon them than those whose business activities rest in a smaller scale. The multitude of decisions which must be made in the direction of industry necessitate a careful parcelling of time and effort which, not understood, may seem to raise a barrier against the friendly intercourse

of those more fortunately placed with less of daily pressure. There must be constructed a time-table of daily appointments and conferences and a precise routine out of which grows the decisions that maintain constant operation and steady employment. Assistants and secretaries must sift out the most essential matters which require personal attention and thus a necessarily less ready access, if misunderstood, will cloak the directors of large industry with the appearance of a less friendly interest in human daily contact. This is, however, a very superficial aspect. Most of those men who today head the large enterprises of America have themselves risen from the ranks of workers and only those utterly unfamiliar with human memories and human impulses can believe these men respond any less keenly to the same human emotions they felt before they attained their leadership in business. At the bottom, men of big business and men of little business, both are just essentially folks, human folks. They respond to the same inspirations and adhere to the same loyalties.

Loyalty to family and friends, to City and to State, is a universal human virtue. Loyalty to voluntary business associations, however, to be enduring, must find a stronger motive than that of selfish personal interest. To be a live community

force, it must rest upon the strength of an appeal to standards and ethics that touch something that lies deep in every man. In organized business, the motive which has multiplied trade and community business organizations, and has quickened their influence in trade circles and community life, has been a clearer understanding of the part they play in the maintenance of fair-play. There has been, to be sure, a recognition of the effectiveness of team-play through organization, but through it all the inspiration has been, after all, that in the democracy of organization, as in the democracy of the commonwealth, man-to-man association with equal rights and equal opportunities, satisfies the universal aspiration for conditions of absolute equality, the equal chance of fair play.

The foundations of this Republic were laid by men of courage and ambition, rebelling under a social and political autocracy which suppressed the freedom of opportunity known as fair play.

It was not fair-play when only those men fortunate in birth or in fortune possessed a voice in the selection of the Administrative officers and the enactment of laws under which all must live. In America there was established universal suffrage, one vote for each man, a re-

sponse in that day to the aspirations of fair play.

It then developed that it was not fair-play that the women of a community had no voice in the laws that governed them, and the public conscience only recently eliminated this violation of fair play.

It is not fair-play, today, that organizations of men, associated for lawful activities and rightful ends, shall stand unequal before the law, with exemptions for organizations of labor or organizations of growers. The time will come, and soon, when these inequalities will be removed, because they violate the fundamental human sense of fair play.

It is not fair play that organizations of men shall deny the right to work to men of other views. It is increasingly clear that public opinion condemns organizations that, by force and violence, offend thus the public sense of fair play.

It is not fair play when organizations, with whatever claim of proper purpose, avoid their own responsibility, by shrouding their identity behind the mask and hood. Organizations of that character can maintain their existence only if the community depart entirely from the ideals which preserve fair play.

It is not fair play if there be evolved, either from human laws or from social

custom, a system which would encase a man in the social strata in which he is placed by accident of birth. In the Old World this rigid caste system freezes into social strata, and stifles individual talent and ambition. It is, indeed, the cause of and the excuse for the injection into Government of organizations frankly devoted to the interest of a single section of their people. But where no doors are closed by accident of birth or station against those possessed of superior ability or devoted to superior effort, there is no excuse for the formation of political influence on the basis of trade or social position. Labor Parties or Farm Blocs have no lasting place under the American conditions of national fair play.

It is not fair play for a Government, exercising exclusive authority to issue currency denominations, in which is recorded the savings of thrift and self-denial, the provision of life insurance protection for survivors, and on the stability of which depends the healthy functioning of trade and commerce, on which rests employment and opportunity, and therefore the happiness and content of its peoples, to deliberately inflate or deflate the value of that traditional measure of value, with its resultant distress and disaster. It should be America's chief pride that in these recent years of reckless cur-

rency inflation in other lands, recording the betrayal of a sacred public trust and the destruction of the economic life and happiness of whole peoples, that our record is one of intelligent effort in the stability of currency and the most profound response thus, on the part of Government, to the preservation of fair play.

It is not fair play that the necessary power of regulation of those public services which necessarily possess the character of monopoly, such as railroads, traction services, or public utilities, shall be administered in such a narrow view of selfish interest and such total disregard of solemn responsibility that the investments which created these public services shall be undermined or destroyed. There is every evidence that we have passed the era of unfair and short-sighted over-rigid regulation, and are administering the public responsibilities toward those necessarily publicly regulated public services with a more enlightened vision of fair play.

It is not fair play that public services should be operated by the State, over-manned often for political support, the services provided below the actual cost of operation, and the resultant deficit made up from public monies assessed through the power of taxation levied on all its citizens.

It is not fair play that, through unequal and unwise taxation, special sections of our people, numerically strong, shall levy an unfair burden, in a spirit of envy and resentment, against those other groups more fortunate than themselves. The range of employment opportunity is constantly widened with the establishment of new enterprises, and taxation which destroys the human incentive of prospective earnings against the unusual hazards of new ventures, and which stifles the willingness to take the risks of new trade and business ventures, is unwise as well as a violation of fundamental fair play.

It is not fair play for a group of men temporarily in position of authority in national legislation to vote, for any purpose, gigantic appropriations from the national treasury, and seek to avoid the responsibility of providing the revenues from which these appropriations can be paid. To leave to their successors the perplexing problem of providing the means of payment, while they, themselves, short-sightedly seek the present approval of those who benefit by their reckless drafts upon the public funds, is a distressing violation of the principles of fair play.

Organized business does not arrogate to itself a superiority of understanding

of the ethics of fair play, nor does it plume itself as expressly the champion of that cause which carries a deep appeal to men of every station. Organized business, however, responsible not only for its own well-being, but because of its position as largely the directors of industry, and therefore responsible for the opportunity and employment of many times its numbers, has an especially keen appreciation of the atmosphere in which human activities may prosper. Organized business has a keen appreciation that the incentive to all effort rests on the confidence that superior service in any form will be rewarded, and those rewards secured and protected.

Under conditions of absolute fair play between individuals, society apportions through the processes of trade a sure and fair reward to those individuals who serve it best, by new inventions or superior ability in production or superior methods of distributions. In our short national history, under the stimulus of this individualistic fair play, we have led the world in applying science and invention through the service of industry in the enlargement of human comfort and content. The spectacular individual fortunes bestowed in appreciation by the methods of free and competitive trade, so far from being a social injury, are the

shining goals that inspire the efforts of countless numbers of our young people. The aggregate thus of ambitious effort creates new fields of opportunities and widens old fields, with an immense quickening of human content and happiness.

In Europe recently, we have seen social theories, preached for generations in academic discussion, put into actual operation. We have seen the communism of Russia utterly destroy the economic life of a great people and bring its famished millions to the very gateway of death, stayed only by the generous hand of individualistic America. We have seen the socialist governments of Austria and Germany violate the ethics of sound commercial practice, and financial honesty, and we see their people sinking into hopeless despair, their voices raised in appeal to be saved against themselves, by individualistic America. The contrast between America, possessed of a substantial prosperity, and those sections of Europe where existence has become scarcely more than a struggle for daily bread and shelter, rests on something larger than the possession of natural resources or fortunate geographical location. It rests on a social and political philosophy which encourages the best effort of every individual of its hundred million people, because, assured of the

freedom of opportunity and security in the enjoyment of the rewards which follow superior service. That freedom of opportunity, and its stimulant to productive effort, is secured by a theory of the relation of Government to Industry, for the sole and primary purpose of preserving the conditions of absolute equality and fair play. Men of narrow experience and immature processes of thought constantly attempt to use the authority of representative government for ill-considered social remedies, undermining and discouraging the multiplied individual effort which has built our splendid progress and prosperity.

In an 'unwise relation of Government to Commerce and Industry rests the seeds of potential national deterioration and decay. Organized business must be prepared to state its case with clear and convincing logic, with fairness and moderation, and with complete sincerity. In deciding what causes to support and what measures to oppose, business organizations can apply one relatively simple test to every legislative enactment and administrative act, namely: Is it a 'necessary step in the Government's clear-cut function of the preservation of fair-play and equal opportunity for every individual?

Conceptions will alter, with actual experience, to be sure, as to what activity

of Government may be necessary in the preservation of fair play, but if this test is applied in all sincerity, without a color of selfish interest, having in mind the preservation of the broad field of opportunity for all our coming generations of young people, the shifting frontier between Government and Industry will, after all, be defined with reasonable exactness.

This is the truest liberalism, because it demands fair and equal opportunity for every man.

In America the various sports of our youth teach the principles of team-play and of fair play that should guide also our commercial organizations in the field of commerce and industry. On every baseball diamond and football field the qualities of fortitude and courage inspired by loyalty to club or town or college is the vast training field for earnest yet generous competition in commerce and industry. The lesson of the effectiveness of team-play has been well carried into American trade and community organization. It follows also that by constant survey and self-questioning these organizations shall preserve throughout America in the maturer years of business life the idealistic yet common-sense inspiration of fair play.

In business, in trade, in industry, and in the relations of Government to the activities of all its people, local, state and national, Organizations, such as your own, as also the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, resting upon a foundation of 1400 such organizations, must observe for themselves, and insist as well on the observance by others, loyal adherence to the highest traditions of American fair play.

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